

Please insert claims 29 – 40 as contained in the attached revised clean copy of the specification and claims.

The following is a synopsis of claim changes for the application:

Claims 1 – 21 (cancelled)

Claim 22 (withdrawn)

Claim 23 (cancelled)

Claim 24 (withdrawn)

Claim 25 (cancelled)

Claim 26 (withdrawn)

Claims 27 – 28 (cancelled)

29. [New] In combination:

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- (a) a U-beam top joint, comprising:
 - (i) a side U-beam having a first surface;
 - (ii) a side bracket beam; and
 - (iii) a pair of spaced inward facing lumber leg support surfaces joining the side U-beam and side bracket beam together, each inward facing lumber leg support surface dimensioned to accept a lumber leg between the support surface, the side U-beam and the side bracket beam and positioned at a predetermined angle with respect to the first surface;
 - (b) a U-beam splay bar, comprising:
 - (i) a pair of opposed outward facing lumber leg guiding surfaces; and
 - (ii) a connecting member extending longitudinally between the lumber leg guiding surfaces and connecting them together, the outwardly facing lumber leg guiding surfaces positioned at the pre-determined angle with respect to the longitudinal axis of the connecting member;

wherein a pair of lumber legs may be positioned between respective inward facing lumber leg support surfaces and between the side U-beam and side bracket beam of the U-beam top joint and adjacent the outward facing guiding surfaces of the U-beam splay bar so that first ends of the lumber legs adjacent the U-beam top joint are forced toward each other when the U-beam splay bar is moved in the direction of the U-beam top joint to force the lumber legs to pivot about the inward facing lumber leg support surfaces.

30. [New] The combination of Claim 29 wherein side enclosing brackets are affixed to the side U-beam of the U-beam top joint.

31. [New] The combination of Claim 29 wherein side enclosing brackets are affixed to a side of the U-beam splay bar.

32. [New] The combination of Claim 29 wherein side enclosing brackets are affixed to the side U-beam of the U-beam top joint and side enclosing brackets are affixed to a side of the U-beam splay bar.

33. [New] The combination of claim 29 further comprising a pair of spaced opposed flanks extending outwardly from each guiding surface in parallel alignment, each pair of flanks and respective guiding surfaces dimensioned to accept a lumber leg between respective flanks and the guiding surface.

34. [New] The combination of Claim 33 wherein each flank extends in a perpendicular direction with respect to the outward facing lumber leg guiding surface.

35. [New] The combination of Claim 33 in which the flanks include holes through which a nail may be inserted into a lumber leg.

36. [New] The combination of claim 29 wherein a lumber top member is interposed between the lumber leg first ends and the first ends of the lumber legs apply pressure against the lumber top member when the U-beam splay bar is moved toward the U-beam top joint.

37. [New] The combination of Claim 29 wherein the U-beam top joint further comprises an axial slot dimensioned to accept a lumber member therein to extend axially in the direction of the longitudinal axis of the side U-beam.

38. [New] The combination of Claim 37 wherein the axial slot is positioned on the side bracket beam.

39. [New] The combination of Claim 37 wherein the axial slot is positioned on the side U-beam.

40. [New] The combination of Claim 29 wherein the U-beam splay bar further comprises an axial slot dimensioned to accept a lumber member therein to extend axially in the direction of the longitudinal axis of the U-beam splay bar.

In the Specification

Please amend the specification in the manner contained in the attached clean and marked copy of the specification. The marked copy shows changes made to the specification as compared to the specification submitted under cover of the communication to the Office of November 28, 1999.

Drawings

Please amend Figure 1 by adding reference number 54 in the manner indicated on the enclosed copy marked in red.

Please amend Figure 5 by adding reference numeral 55 in the manner indicated on the enclosed copy marked in red.